United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Surprise Field Office
602 Cressler Street
Cedarville, CA 96104
www.ca.blm.gov/surprise

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29 May 2009

NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION
LANDS IN WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

STATE: Nevada

COUNTY: Washoe

FIELD OFFICE: Surprise Field Office
602 Cressler
Cedarville, California 96104

WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS: Wall Canyon WSA (CA-020-805)

PROPOSED ACTION: **Control and removal of non-native brown trout in a portion of Wall Canyon Creek to enhance recovery of native Wall Canyon sucker, a state listed species of concern and BLM sensitive species.**

Background

Wall Canyon Creek provides one of two habitat reaches for the Wall Canyon Sucker, a native fish species. This species is classified as a State species of concern, and a BLM sensitive species. NDOW, along with the BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been working cooperatively for several years to determine and implement conservation measures that would protect this sucker species from being listed under the Endangered Species Act. As a result of this coordinated effort, approximately seven miles of Wall Canyon Creek above the Wall Canyon Reservoir have been identified as important habitat where this species will be specifically managed for.

In 1999 the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) noted a large decrease in the population of Wall Canyon sucker. A small group representing state and federal agencies first met in January of 2001 to discuss a strategy to identify causes for this decline and to recommend solutions. After several alternatives were studied it was concluded that building a fish barrier to separate native and non-native fish would be the only option that would allow for both a recreational fishery to remain while still providing habitat for the native sucker. It was understood that after a barrier was built,

removal of brown trout above the barrier would be necessary to eliminate the primary threat to the the sucker population. The BLM and NDOW initiated planning activities to construct the fish barrier and after consultation with the public, and completion of necessary reviews, the Wall Canyon fish barrier was built in June of 2007.

The Nevada Department of Wildlife has now acquired funding to undertake the removal of trout above the barrier and on December 12, 2008 provided notification of the intent to conduct this activity. Removal activities are to take place in a 5.1 mile section of Wall Canyon Creek above the fish barrier. Alternative methods to reduce or eliminate fish have been tried in several areas with only limited success. Within Wall Canyon Creek, NDOW has electro-shocked to lower the numbers of larger predatory brown trout. However this method is not effective at removing all fish. Electro-shocking of fish is considered a short-term mitigation and not a permanent solution to this problem because it is not as effective at fish removal and requires significant long-term investments of time, personnel, and funding.

Project activities would be spread from approximately SEC 16, T39N, R20 E to SEC 31, T39N, R20 E, about 7 miles above Wall Canyon reservoir and around the southern boundary of the Wall Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA), see attached map. Location for the existing barrier is NW ¼, SEC 31, T 39 N, R 20 E, at the bottom of the proposed treatment reach.

Description of the Proposed Action

NDOW is planning to conduct the treatment in late July 2009. Prior to treatment, Wall Canyon sucker will be collected within the treatment area then released back into the area above the barrier after treatment. Treatment is expected to take from two to four days. The location of the treatment is within the current extent of brown trout identified by NDOW above the existing barrier (see attached map). Treatment will utilize a formulation of CFT Legumine rotenone, which is derived from plant compounds and is approved for application in water for the control of fish. Vehicles used to deliver treatment materials and personnel will remain on existing roads within the WSA. Treatment areas are inside the WSA and will be accessed by foot. The treatment will be accomplished by placing approximately six drip stations over the treatment reach and one to several cross channel nets to collect affected fish. At the bottom of the treatment reach, two neutralizing stations will be placed which will deactivate the rotenone. All of these drip stations, along with the cross channel nets will be temporarily placed and completely removed after treatment. There will be no alteration of vegetation plants or soils during the treatment, and all materials and packaging will be manually removed after the treatment. According to NDOW, "the project includes detoxification procedures that are designed to protect the rest of the sport-fish resources in Wall Canyon Creek and Wall Canyon Reservoir." The use of rotenone-based products to manage fishery resources is a scientifically accepted, effective, safe and efficient technique. No human or livestock related effects have occurred from rotenone use in fisheries management. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has concluded the "use of rotenone for fish control does not present a risk of unreasonable adverse effects to humans or the environment."

Wall Canyon sucker would be released back into the system when rotenone levels reach a safe level. Impacts associated with this activity are expected to be short term, related to the presence of personnel within the stream corridor during the two to four day treatment window. For a brief period following treatment, macro-invertebrate populations will also be reduced. It is also anticipated that there would be some mortality of suckers, Redside shiner and Speckled dace which remain in the stream, however these effects would be mitigated when surviving members of these species reproduce and experience the benefits of reduced or eliminated predation by brown trout. According to NDOW angler use in the treatment section of the stream has been very low as a result of the remoteness of the site, so longer

term effects to those using this section of stream for fishing would be minimal. No long term impacts are expected to wilderness values from this action.

The Surprise Field Office will be finalizing a non-impairment analysis for this activity prior to initiation of treatment.

To send comments on this proposed activity please contact Shane DeForest, Field Manager at the address above. Please send any comments by June 29, 2009.

Shane DeForest
Surprise Field Office Manager

Attachment: Project location map